

# Committee on Resources

## Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans

---

### Statement

---

### Statement

---

**STATEMENT BY THE HONORABLE JIM SAXTON, CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISHERIES CONSERVATION, WILDLIFE AND OCEANS, AT THE HEARING ON H.R. 1775, THE ESTUARY HABITAT RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP ACT: SEPT. 16, 1999.**

---

Today we will hear testimony from our distinguished witnesses regarding Congressman Wayne Gilchrest's (MD-1st) bill, H.R. 1775, to catalyze estuary restoration and coordinate Federal estuarine activities. This is an excellent bill, and this action is long overdue from the Federal Government. I am a cosponsor of this measure, and I commend Mr. Gilchrest for his leadership on this issue. I remain committed to attacking the problems facing this nation's estuaries and to restoring degraded coastal habitat. Over a decade ago, Congress created the National Estuary Program to address serious environmental problems in estuaries of national significance. These problems include polluted runoff, habitat loss, development pressure, and harmful algal blooms. Unfortunately, despite a significant amount of planning, very little effort has been made to implement comprehensive conservation and management plans or to actively restore the most seriously degraded estuarine areas. I am pleased that today we are taking positive steps to improve this unacceptable situation.

H.R. 1775 will, for the first time, coordinate Federal agencies with the responsibility for estuary management. This is an idea whose time is long overdue. H.R. 1775 also provides funding to implement estuary management plans, undertake habitat restoration activities, and prevent further losses. H.R. 1775 requires a non-Federal partner to provide matching funds for estuary restoration projects. I am a strong supporter of requiring local or state matching funds for these types of activities. Building local support and including the citizens who live and work near these estuaries strengthens the program and will result in long-term benefits for the natural resources that are dependent on these areas.

I fully support Mr. Gilchrest's bill as well as other efforts to address problems in the coastal zone. Not only am I a cosponsor of H.R. 1775, but I have introduced a companion bill, H.R. 1237, that would allow the Environmental Protection Agency to use funds appropriated for the National Estuary Program to be used, for the first time, to implement comprehensive conservation and management plans. I will also continue to urge the reauthorization of the Coastal Zone Management Act. H.R. 2669, the Coastal Community Conservation Act, which this Subcommittee approved on August 5, 1999, includes provisions for increasing local involvement in coastal zone management and it reauthorizes the National Estuarine Reserve System. Together with H.R. 1775, these measures will have a positive impact on our coastal resources well into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

#####